

Get hooked



**Don't fear
the fish.**

Local options
make it fun and
easy to prepare.

Fish is not normally the entrée associated with Midwestern life, but as it turns out, there are plenty of places to find great fish in Greater Lafayette, and with some tips for preparation, you can easily expand your fish repertoire.

The problem of geography was solved 50 years ago with the advent of modern air travel, says Michael Miller, director of seafood marketing at Marsh Supermarkets. Still, he notes, Midwesterners like their beef.

“Seafood is definitely a tougher sell in the Midwest, but I think it’s more of a cultural thing as opposed to a logistics situation,” says Miller. “Logistics are there to support any item that we want, at any time of the day. We’ve got fish coming in from all over the world, and the distance is really not the issue.”

Perhaps a greater awareness of spotting a good piece of fish at the store along with some fast and easy ways to prepare fish would break down some of the perceptions.

For example, when shopping for fish, if you see edges that are a different color than the center of the filet, or the filet appears to be dried out, this may indicate the fish is not fresh, explains Shawn Spencer, meat and seafood merchandising manager at the Kroger Co. Central Division, which has 150 stores, including the Pay Less grocery stores in Lafayette and West Lafayette.

As for cooking tips, the key, Miller says, is to keep the moisture in the fish, so that it doesn’t lose its flavor in the cooking process.

“A lot of times fish is overcooked. People will put it in the oven, and they will leave it in the oven for 30 and 40 minutes, and really it’s not necessary. Whatever method you use, just make sure that you do not overcook seafood,” he says. One method that is often used is to estimate the time it takes to cook the fish based on the thickness of the piece: 10 minutes per inch of thickness.▶▶



North Shore Seafood in downtown Lafayette sells flash frozen fish from all over the world.

With much improved handling and storing techniques, a debate has emerged about whether fresh fish is actually tastier than frozen.

Dave Gray, seafood manager at the D&R Market in Lafayette, still prefers fresh to frozen because, he says, when the fish thaws out, it loses some of its flavor and can become too watery.

"I have always thought that the texture of fresh seafood is a little better than frozen," Gray notes. Calculating cooking time is another problem with frozen fish, he explains, because people often don't know when the fish is completely thawed, and it can still be frozen in the middle. Since overcooking fish is a common problem, a simple thing like thawing becomes important to the end result of the taste.

At the D&R Market, customers even have the option of buying a variety of prepared fish that makes it fairly straightforward for the cook because all that is necessary is perhaps adding a marinade or sauce, and then heating it up.

For example, just about every day at D&R, the store carries smoked salmon that just needs to be warmed up in the oven or it can be served cold, too. Gray suggests putting charred pineapple bourbon sauce on the smoked salmon, heating it for five minutes at 350 degrees, and the quick end result is a great tasting main course. Charred pineapple

bourbon sauce is sold in many grocery retailers, and specifically, gourmet groceries. Good side dishes with fish include salad, sautéed vegetables and different types of rice.

Depending on how the fish is frozen, certain types of frozen fish can be just as good as or even better than what is advertised as fresh fish, says Lenny Patterson, president of North Shore Seafoods, LLC on Main Street in Lafayette. Patterson opened his store in 2009 because he saw a need for good fish in the Lafayette area. He and his family moved here from Alaska in 2008, where he lived for almost 30 years. Patterson has also lived in Tampa, Fla., and Portland, Ore.

"So I have always had access to good quality seafood," he says.

He became even more interested in finding good seafood when his teenage son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes shortly after they moved here, and he knew that fish was a good meal choice for his son's diet.

In his store, he carries flash frozen fish, which means that soon after the fish is caught, it is vacuum sealed and flash frozen using a liquid nitrogen system, which intensifies the cold temperature. The liquid nitrogen freezes the fish in seconds, he says, and it's the speed at which the fish is frozen that helps to keep it fresh tasting by locking in the flavor and the consistency. The advantage of flash frozen over fresh, he says, is that with fresh fish, it does take some time to appear on the retail shelf, and the end result can be less fresh tasting than flash frozen fish.

Shoppers at Meijer looking for nutritious meals can use the NuVal

Nutrition Scoring System to pick out fish, says Maribel Alchin, registered dietician, personal chef, and healthy living advisor at Meijer, Inc. The NuVal system rates foods on a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 as the highest nutritional value, explains Alchin. The scoring system includes fish as well, and the stores sell up to 50 varieties of fresh fish.

"Another suggestion for preparing fish is to sauté the fish on a medium heat, and to test whether it flakes to know when it is done," she says.

Demand and attention to purchasing good seafood has gone up at the Pay Less stores in Greater Lafayette, notes Spencer.

The increased attention can be attributed to a more sophisticated culinary customer, in addition to better marketing, display and advertising of seafood at the store, says John Elliott, public affairs manager at the Kroger Central Division.

Among the many varieties of seafood sold at the stores are lobsters already prepared. All that is necessary is to heat it up in the oven at 350 degrees or place the cooked lobster in a pot of boiling water for five minutes, notes Spencer, which should keep the moisture intact. Another way to heat up the lobster is to grill it, using a foil packet (a layer on the top and on the bottom) to keep moisture and the flavor of marinades.

"I think if customers understood how easy it is to stick something on a pan, add a few ingredients, and put it in the broiler for 15 minutes, and it's ready to go. You have a fresh, relatively healthy piece of fish," Spencer says. ❄

D&R Market in Lafayette carries a variety of fresh fish that can be warmed up or served cold.



Simple Seafood RECIPES

Fast and Easy Salmon

(Lenny Patterson, President, North Shore Seafoods, LLC)

- frozen salmon
- melted butter or olive oil
- cracked pepper
- lemon slices
- onion slices

Cook salmon from frozen. Take the portion or the filet and put melted butter or olive oil on the fish and season it with cracked pepper. Put thin slices of lemon across the base of the fish, then surround each lemon with the outer rings of a mild onion.

Place the seasoned salmon on a cookie sheet or on a grill, cook at 400 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.

For a side dish, sauté broccoli and red and yellow bell peppers with a small amount of garlic and onion, and serve with rice pilaf.

Seared Halibut

(Shawn Spencer, meat and seafood merchandising manager, Kroger Co., Central Division)

- 4 pieces center-cut halibut, ½-inch thick
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- salt to taste
- freshly ground black pepper to taste

This recipe involves using the stove top and the oven. Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Heat 2 Tablespoons olive oil in a cast iron skillet on high setting for 2 minutes. Put fish directly on pan. Sear approximately 1-2 minutes and turn the fish. It will smoke and cook very quickly. Do not overcook.

After the fish is seared, place it in the oven to cook for about five minutes or until the fish is done. The internal temperature will be 140 degrees. Season to taste using salt and pepper.

Crunchy Baked Parmesan Cod

(Shawn Spencer, Kroger Co.)

- 1 lb. cod fillets
- cooking spray
- 1 cup crushed corn flakes
- 2 Tablespoons parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon dill weed
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 egg, beaten
- lemon wedges

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Prepare the baking sheet by spraying it with cooking spray.

In a zip lock bag, mix crushed corn flakes, parmesan cheese, dill weed, salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, whisk together egg and milk.

Dip the cod in the egg and milk mixture, then place the cod in the bag and press the cornflake mixture to the fish for the coating. Put the fish on the baking sheet, bake for 10-12 minutes, and use a fork to make sure the fish flakes easily.

You can serve the fish with lemon wedges for extra flavor.

Catfish Tacos

(Marsh.net)

- 1 lb. catfish fillets
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 lime
- ¼ cup low-fat mayonnaise
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 tomato, seeded and chopped
- ¼ cup black olives, chopped
- 4 fat-free flour tortillas, warmed

Preheat broiler. Coat broiler pan rack with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle catfish with chili powder; season to taste with salt and pepper. Place catfish on broiler pan rack. Broil 4 to 6 inches from heat 8 to 12 minutes, turning once, or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Break catfish into 2-inch pieces.

Grate 1 teaspoon peel from the lime. Squeeze lime for 1 Tablespoon juice. In a small bowl combine mayo, lime peel and juice. Fill warm tortillas with catfish, lime-mayonnaise, shredded lettuce, tomato and olives.



Snow Crab with Homemade Tartar Sauce

(Mike Miller, director of seafood marketing, Marsh Supermarkets)

Tartar Sauce

- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 Tablespoons chopped dill pickle
- 2 Tablespoons chopped red onion
- 2 Tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon chopped jalapeno

Crab

- 3 lbs. frozen snow crab, thawed
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

To prepare the tartar sauce, in a medium bowl, combine mayonnaise, lime juice, pickles, onion, parsley and jalapeno. Cover the bowl and refrigerate the sauce until ready to serve.

To prepare the crab, spray a grill rack with nonstick cooking spray. Preheat the grill to a medium setting (300 to 350 degrees). Sprinkle the olive oil over the crab and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Put the crab on the grill, and grill it 4-5 minutes on each side, or until done. Serve the crab with the tartar sauce.